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ABSTRACT

We should no longer be wondering if we should have performance appraisal, rather we should be researching the elements necessary for it to be successfully implemented and to ensure that we receive maximum benefits for improved learning for our students. Performance appraisal can be defined as "a positive, systematic, individualized due process evaluation program that can be applied to all members of the school organization. It is based on the assumption that people want to do a good job. It puts responsibility on both appraiser and appraisee to reach mutually agreed-upon objectives. The benefits are improved instruction for students, changes in practitioner behavior, enhanced commitment and communication." Performance appraisal is based on objective data rather than on personality and other factors. The experience of the Hyde Park (New York) school district in using this program has been positive but not without its problems. (Author/IRT)

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SPEAKER: Frank Gray, Assistant Superintendent of Schools for Instruction, Hyde Park, N.Y.

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It is interesting to note that the School Administrators Convention was first held in Dallas almost fifty years ago in 1927. Thirty years prior to that, in the summer of 1897, the record show that the meeting was held in Washington. Joseph Mayer Rice reported to one of the seminars, a research project he had done in the area of spelling. His findings indicated that children who studied spelling for forty minutes a day in certain schools did not spell any better than children in other schools, who studied spelling for only ten minutes a day. His audience reacted with dismay and indignant protest. The opposition was not against his findings or methods, but rather against the researcher, who had attempted to measure the results of spelling by testing.

In a journal article written in 1912, by Leonard Ayers, titled "Measuring Educational Processes by Educational Results," this incident was cited as a critical point in changing the attitude of school administrators who now agree that the effectiveness of schools and the methods of teachers must be measured by the results achieved. Measuring the effectiveness of teaching and student performance is still a topic of interest to the public and school administrators. There has not been too much progress in the area of measuring practitioner effectiveness because of the educators stance that it is impossible to make valid judgments about anything as complex and personal as teaching ability.

However, just as "Sputnik" in the 1950's caused us to do what some had considered the impossible task of landing on the moon: legislatures, scarce resources and the public cries of accountability, have forced us to take on the impossible task of measuring the performance personnel within our schools.

The question facing us is not if we should have Performance Appraisal, but rather to research the elements necessary for it to be successfully implemented and to insure that we receive maximum benefits for improved learning for our students. Evaluation of personnel is not a new procedure. It has always been with us. In the past, however, evaluation of personnel was similar to evaluating a meal in a restaurant. Each one of us has his own standards as to what is good eating. After the meal is eaten, we make judgments based on our own taste. In fact, the success of the meal might not even be based on the food but on the other factors such as the price, service or decor of the restaurant. Similar standards have been applied to school personnel, by using either rating sheets or observations by administrators sitting in the back of classrooms with their own pre-conceived ideas on the way lessons should be taught. "This God complex of some evaluators," as McGregor pointed out, "may be one of the most important reasons why most appraisal systems don't work."

More recent attempts at Performance Appraisal have focused on a philosophy which accepts a person's desire and ability to grow. A working relationship is envisioned, whereby:

1. Appraisee and appraiser are mutually committeed to accomplishment of an objective or objectives.

2. A clear understanding usually through a written and agreed-to work plan is developed.
3. Monitoring system and timetable for accomplishment of various parts of the work plan are agreed to.
4. Expected outcomes upon which the evaluation will be made are mutually set in advance.
5. The appraisee is encouraged to self-assess his job performance and the degree to which the outcomes of the evaluation are achieved.

The evaluation is based on objective data rather than on personality and other factors. How does this differ from the past systems of evaluation? Unlike the restaurateur who is unaware of what his customers expect before they come to the restaurant, performance appraisal makes a person aware of the basis of his evaluation so that he has an opportunity to improve rather than finding out about expectations that he did not reach after it is too late to do anything about them.

In order to make certain that we are thinking about the same thing when we talk about Performance Appraisal, I offer the following working definition. Performance Appraisal is "a positive, systematic, individualized due process evaluation program that can be applied to all members of the school organization. It is based on the assumption that people want to do a good job. It puts responsibility on both appraiser and appraisee to reach mutually agreed upon objectives. The benefits are improved instruction for students, changes in practitioner behavior, enhanced commitment and communication."

I would like to talk about why we got into Performance Appraisal and then determine the extent to which the benefits just mentioned were achieved.

There were two major reasons that caused us to develop a Performance Evaluation Plan for Hyde Park. One was that there was little or no evidence given to our Board to substantiate personnel recommendations and secondly, many of our staff were unsure of"how they were doing" and wanted to find ways of doing a better job.

A Performance Appraisal Program developed by George Redfern, more commonly known as the job-target approach, was introduced to teachers, administrators, Board members and teacher association representatives. It seemed to make sense and fit the guidelines set by the District for an Evaluation Program. Although a District has an obligation to evaluate its employees, it was our feeling that a District also has an obligation to involve its staff in the development of programs that will effect them.

The first phase of this involvement had a committee of elected teachers and administrators develop a manual of procedures which included a philosophy and objectives for the Evaluation Program. This was a critical step since subsequent evaluations of the program could be judged against these benchmarks. The manual also contained clearly outlined steps of the process, simple forms that were to be used and a timetable for events in the appraisal cycle. We wanted to make certain that the program did not contain any surprises.

The most important work of the committee dealt with the development of a job description for a teacher. Very early, the committee had to deal with the questions, How can we evaluate an employee if we don't make his job expectations clear?, Is a teacher's evaluation limited to classroom performance or is he also expected to be active in community affairs? The job description is contained in the Manual and is the starting point for many job objectives. Development of the Appraisal Manual necessitated frequent communication with the rest of the staff. This was accomplished by presenting tentative drafts of the manual to the staff by the committee members for the reaction and questions. Extensive in-service training and consultant help were provided to the committee and staff.

If evaluation is applicable to teachers, shouldn't the process also be used for adminis-

trators? At the same time, a committee worked on an Appraisal Manual and program for administrators which paralleled that of the teachers. Within six months both the teacher and administrator Appraisal Manuals were completed. A pilot program was started to try our the mechanics of the program and to serve as a basis for making changes before the full-scale program was implemented. After completion of the pilot program and each successive year, an evaluation was made of the program through a questionnaire developed by the Appraisal Committee.

It is on the basis of this information and the experience of being intimately involved with the implementation of the Performance Appraisal Program, that my conclusions are drawn.

In evaluating the success of Performance Appraisal during its first few years, we did not attempt to measure too many items. We resisted the urge to correlate a decrease in broken windows or mispelled graffiti words in the bathrooms to the advent of the Appraisal program. Rather, we looked at the basic reason for which we started the program: namely--to provide evidence to the Board of Education for re-employment recommendations.

Performance Appraisal was successful in providing such data if meaningful objectives were set. If the areas of concern were identified, then appropriate evidence was supplied. If a teacher was having a problem with classroom discipline and it became clear to both parties what action had to be take to improve, then appropriate data could be supplied. However, if the teacher had classroom management problems and chose doing research on the correct amount of time that should be allocated to the teaching of spelling as a target, it would not yield the kind of information needed for decision-making.

You are probably wondering how many teachers, if any, did we fire since using the process? Remember that the purpose of appraisal is to improve. However, it would be naive to assume that the data gathered would not be used in a due process procedure to prove incompetence. We did not take any teachers to court. However, we worked closely with the Teacher Association in the case of each teacher we were not considering asking back. Several of the teachers were tenured and several were not. In each case, the teacher and the Association were satisfied that a due process procedure had been followed and the teacher was counselled out.

There were also instances of teachers having been "saved" and recommended for continuous employment on the basis of their knowing far in advance what the problems were and having met those expectations with the support of their appraisers. It was in these instances that I felt the time and effort spent in implementing the program were made worthwhile.

The second reason that was cited for our original interest in appraisal was that people were unsure of how they were doing and wanted to do a more effective job. Our Appraisal Committee attempted to measure whether better communication between teacher and administrator had occurred during the first years of the program. We found that people began to talk to one another more and that this talk was related to what was happening with the job targets. Teachers began saying that this is the first time that the principal was aware of what they were trying to accomplish.

The principals on appraisal were relieved to know that they shared similar priorities with their appraiser, who in our situation is the Superintendent. They no longer had to guess what the Superintendent's expectations were. There was now written agreement as to those priorities.

More specifically the data indicated that:

--seventy-eight of seventy-nine appraisees felt that appraisal enhanced communication and caused teachers to talk with administrators about instructional problems that they normally didn't talk about. The benefit of the communication being two-way process was emphasized.

--A significant number of teachers felt that the quality of help offered to them by their principal greatly improved after they had become involved in the appraisal process. In other words, the principal's role as instructional leader was enhanced.

--Prior to appraisal, about half of the appraisees felt their principal did not work with them on professional growth activities before appraisal--after appraisal, this figure dropped to 20 percent.

And what about the feeling of doing a better job?

--Over half of the appraisees felt they had undertaken and completed professional growth activities that they had not found time to plan for in the past.

--Over 98 percent of the teachers and all of the administrators felt that the work they did resulted in either program, pupil or practitioner improvement.

In analyzing the targets set over a period of years, it was apparent that, as people gained trust in the process, they set more realistic targets. The appraisee, through his own self-assessment, more readily evaluated his own strengths and weaknesses and identified critical areas in which to work. Although both appraiser and appraisee suggest job targets, we have found it more beneficial if a person is able to identify his own needs.

Did teachers feel this process was a change from the personality trait system?

--Only one of the seventy-nine appraisees viewed the process as subjective rather than objective.

Did the staff continue accomplishments they had begun during appraisal?

--This was another gratifying result of the program. Many of the job objectives are now being carried on independently by the appraisee. This was one of the major initial goals of the program, and has gone a long way to proving the worth of appraisal.

In subsequent evaluations of the program, we intend to evaluate additional factors. While continuing to monitor data communicating, we will look this year at how well our district goals are being met through job targeting. We have also started a bank of data on student achievement and we will try to assess if there is any relationship between learner accomplishment and the job targeting process.

I often think about the things that I would do differently if I were to start the implementation process over in another school district. Should District goals be set first and then an Appraisal Program, or should a program budget be the first area to be developed? In industry, it is usually the Appraisal Program that comes first. I don't think there is any set pattern or model of implementation that a school district need follow.

There are, however, several factors that will contribute to the success of a Performance Appraisal Program. The one cited most often, and the one I feel most strongly about, is commitment. When the Performance Appraisal Program was first introduced in Hyde Park at a summer workshop, one of the principals commented, "let's not drop this like we do many other good things." Appraisal must be seen as a continued high priority. At the start, expect the apprehension level to rise in the district. It is at this point that the Board and Administration must re-affirm their commitment . As the process is continued, the apprehension will lessen.

In both evaluations of our program, large numbers of the staff felt that other priorities had replaced appraisal during the school year. It was necessary for us then to assess the time demands being placed upon our appraisers and to allocate additional personnel and resources where necessary. The best way of showing commitment was having the superintendent and principals have the success of the Appraisal Program as their personal job target. This emphasized that their job evaluation was based on their support of appraisal.

Another obstancle to the success of Performance Appraisal is the setting of "make work" or "mickey mouse" objectives. For example a teacher might want to set a target in reading horticulture books and attending a gardening course so that by the age of 40 he will be able to open a flower shop and work full-time in a new career. This objective might have meaning for some personal ambition of the appraisee, but has no relation to improvement of on-the-job performance or contributing to the goals of the school district.

Or take another example: the principal who set an "add on" objective in something that he would like to do, such as meeting with book salesmen to familiarize himself with new materials rather than what the superintendent expects him to do, namely developing and meeting a schedule whereby a minimum of three clinical observations is made of each teacher in the building. Objectives must be seen as relating to the on-the-job performance.

If I could point out the key factor to a successful program, it is having skilled appraisers. Teachers in the Appraisal Program cited this as their greatest concern. For most appraisers this will be a new expectation--one for which they have not been prepared in college. Continued in-service by the District must be provided for them. Not only must the appraiser help the appraisee set meaningful objectives, but he and the District must provide the help to enable the appraisee to reach that objective. Any other approach would be immoral. Programs that ask you in September to write two or three objectives, come back to a conference in June and tell you how well you did, are doomed to failure.

Although Performance Appraisal is based on the philsophy that people are motivated to work, as Peter Drucker pointed out, this should not be confused with permissiveness. The process is a highly structured one with roles of people clearly spelled out. If the emphasis is on mutuality, then the appraiser must have "helping" skills. However, don't promise help you can't deliver.

Another block to successful appraisal has been the cry, but where am I going to get all the time to do all these things? There is no doubt that the appraisal process takes a great commitment in time. Appraisers must be trained to effectively manage their day. The Appraisal Program has caused principals and secretaries to work closely together in scheduling the day. Commitment calendars plaster the wall. Principals begin to usher you out of the office after you have had your time allotment. One principal told the superintendent and myself that we had to leave because he had to meet a teacher for a post-conference. Communication between people has increased but is usually directed toward more purposeful ends.

I don't want to end this talk with this audience thinking that we are having an easy time with Appraisal in Hyde Park or that getting past the few hurdles that I just mentioned will ensure a successful Appraisal Program. Nothing would be further from the truth. Although we involved the teacher association from the beginning and believed that involvement equalled commitment, teacher appraisal became a prime topic of negotiations. We were fortunate this time around not to have it included in our agreement, possibly because we did make a serious effort to involve teachers in not only the development, but also the monitoring and evaluation of the program. We also dealt with the issue of merit pay by stating in our Appraisal Manual philosophy that there would be no relationship to appraisal and any merit pay plan. It is our feeling that any compensation plan will tend to cause people to play it safe and set easily achieved objectives, rather than "reaching out" and attempting to grow.

Education U.S.A reports that the "trend seems to be toward greater teacher interest in having evaluation recognized and covered in the master contracts as pressures grow for continuous evaluation of all teachers. The feeling of teacher organizations is that it is better to exercise some control of an inevitable process, than to fight a losing battle opposing it outright. Boards also appear to be moving toward greater acceptance of neogitating evaluation procedures, as experience indicates evaluation works best with full teacher participation." (Education U.S.A , Evaluating Teachers for Professional Growth - page 60). Suffice

it to say that negotiating Performance Appraisal will place additonal limits on administrato
It is the responsibility of schools to evaluate their employees. Hopefully, following a car
ful implementation process, will eliminate many of the sources of conflict which end up in
negotiations.

Finally, when considering Performance Appraisal, I would like you to view it as part of
a total management system. Job targeting should be applied to Board Members, the superin-
tendent and his administrative staff, certified and non-certified personnel and students.

Job targets should enable schools to operationalize system-wide and building goals, curricul
objectives and improve job performance. Performance Appraisal will operate best in schools
that employ a systems approach to not only their Appraisal Program, but also clincial
supervision to classroom observation, systems models to their instructional program and
a systems appraoch to the budgeting process. It will work most effectively where it is
complementary to the total management approach.

The introduction of clinical supervision and instructional management systems in our distric
has met with much greater success, because people were able to relate back to the systems
approach to appraisal that they had experienced and were familiar with it.

There have been many promises made for Performance Appraisal:

1. It is a perfect tool for measuring performance
2. It is a perfect tool for judging the capability of managers.
3. It is a perfect tool for motivating supervisory and professional performance
4. It is an "easy management tool." If an employee participates in setting goals
and then we leave him alone and meet with him later to assess whether he meets the
goals, we then have a way of telling the "good guys" from the "bad guys" (or if
a guy does not meet his goals, he is inefficient.)

There are no easy tools. The Appraisal process does not provide answers to your problems--
it is rather a vehicle for getting things done. It is a way of having two people sit down
discuss topics of mutual and organizational concern, agree on them and then mutually commi
themselves to accomplishing an objective.

One cannot manage by objectives. It is as if one agrees that merely by adopting a system,
all your troubles will go away. The emphasis should be on management for the accomplishmen
of objectives. The systems approach should be a way of thinking as common as the process o
starting and driving your car in the morning.

Performance Appraisal should be appraoched with caution. Critics are beginning to emerge.
fear it will be a powerful, manipulative device used to control the schools. The systems
approach is viewed by many as a tool to reinforce the oppressive, dehumanizing tendencies
of present day schools and destroy genuine and authentic relationships between individuals
in an organization. However, the resulting school climate engendered by Performance
Appraisal does not support these fears.

Research has shown that Performance Appraisal will be most effective if the intent is for
improvement of instruction rather than administrative purposes. Staff members who feel
evaluation is for instructional purposes will support the process. The key is not the tool
but how the tool is used.

Drucker points out that "trees die from the top." Performance Appriasal creates the condit
for leadership. The success of Performance Appraisal will depend upon the integrity, since
and seriousness with which it is approached by educators.